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## Women and Da‘wah in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: An Analysis of Maryam Jameelah's Contributions

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## WOMEN AND DA'WAH IN THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY: AN ANALYSIS OF MARYAM JAMEELAH'S CONTRIBUTIONS

Zohaib Ahmad<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** Maryam Jameelah was a Jewish-American lady who, after embracing Islam, selected Pakistan as her adopted abode. Mostly her conversion to Islam and fierce criticism of western civilization became the topic of discussion among academics. However, her work for da'wah, so evident since her childhood, did not find much attention in the literary circles. A study of her life and works can reveal answers to the questions such as how she engaged herself in this field, what is the methodology adopted by her, and how does her work is useful for the women interested in da'wah. Analysing her published books and articles along with the unpublished material found in her library, the current paper focuses on the practical aspects of her da'wah activities. It is argued that being a convert, she was aware of the problems of people who either converted to Islam or had an interest in it. Thus, targeting an English-speaking audience, she did not only write a bulk of literature to disseminate her understanding of Islam in Euro-American communities, but also practically contributed to this field through her discussions with non-Muslims, correspondence, and economic support for Islamic organizations.

**Keywords:** Maryam Jameelah, da'wah, Islam, women, Pakistan.

### INTRODUCTION

*Da'wah* is defined as the preaching of Islam to people, educating them about it, and applying it in actual life.<sup>2</sup> For Muslims, *da'wah* is a sacred duty as the Qur'an states: "and let there be [arising] from you a nation inviting to [all that is] good, enjoining what is

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<sup>2</sup> Muḥammad Abū al-Faṭḥ Al-Bayānūnī, *Al-Madkhal ilā 'ilm al-da'wah: dirāsah minhajīyah shāmilah li-tārikh al-da'wah wa-uṣūlahā wa-manāhijihā wa-asālibahā wa-wasā'ilahā wa-mushkilātihā fī daw' al-naql wa-al-'aql* (Beirut: Muassasah al-Risālah, 1995), 17.

right and forbidding what is wrong, and those will be the successful."<sup>3</sup> The scope of *da'wah* is beyond the limitations of gender, colour, or race.<sup>4</sup> Thus, similar to men, Muslim women also played their respective roles in preaching the message of Islam since its inception. Even the wives of the prophet Muhammad (PBUH) supported his mission alongside. They helped him both with their social status and wealth.<sup>5</sup> The prophet sent his several companions to different tribes as missionaries to them. Through his letters, he also invited heads of different states to embrace Islam.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, Islam entered different parts of the world during the life of the prophet.<sup>7</sup> Later on, the Muslim conquest of Egypt, Africa, India, Spain, and elsewhere significantly increased the scope of *da'wah*. Muslim soldiers were not mostly the direct agents of conversion, but their conquests opened new horizons for *da'wah*. Through intermarriages and the establishment of Islamic institutions in the newly conquered lands, the conversions of non-Muslims gradually increased.<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, the works of Sufi masters and religious scholars also culminated in the conversion of scores of people to Islam.<sup>9</sup> However, with the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the conquests of Britain, French, Danish, and other colonial powers, not only difficulties for the Muslim community increased but their mission of *da'wah* also

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<sup>3</sup> Al-Qur'an 3:104.

<sup>4</sup> 'Abdul Karīm Zaidān, *Ūṣūl al-Da'wah* (Beirut: Resalah Publishers, 2002), 309.

<sup>5</sup> For example, *Khadijah ibnat Khuwalid* (555-619), the very first wife of the prophet, spent her wealth for the cause of Islam. See, Fakhruddin Razi, *Mafātiḥ al-Ghayb*, vol. 31 (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1981), 219.

<sup>6</sup> After the Treaty of *Hudaybiyyah*, the prophet sent several letters to the many heads of states both inside and outside Arabia calling them towards Islam. See, Muḥammad ibn Jarīr Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, vol. 2 (Cairo: Dār al-M'aārif, 1967), 644.

<sup>7</sup> For details, see Muḥammad Ishāq Bhattī, *Barēsaghīr myñ Musalmānoñ kē Avvōlīn Nuqūsh* (Lahore: Maktabah Salfiyah, 1990), 48.

<sup>8</sup> Lewis R. Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 70.

<sup>9</sup> For example, Khaliq Ahmad Nizami (1925-1997), a notable Indian historian, pointed out that eleven Hindu tribes of Pakpattan, a city of Pakistan, embraced Islam at the hand of Farid al-Dīn Mas'ūd (1179-1266), a famous Sufi of Chishti order. For details, see Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, *The Life and Times of Shaikh Farid-U' d-Din Ganj-i-Shakar* (Aligarh: Muslim University, 1955), 107.

suffered. Although it was not completely stopped,<sup>10</sup> the new political shift reduced its impact significantly. Moreover, orientalist's critique of Islam<sup>11</sup> brought new difficulties for the Muslim *ummah* which was struggling both socially and politically. Some Muslim scholars put their efforts to answer the questions raised by the orientalist's.<sup>12</sup> However, few could write in English, and most of the westerners, therefore, remained unaware of how Muslims themselves understood and propagated their religion.<sup>13</sup> It was exactly the situation in which an American lady started working to defend Islam and she remained doing so for fifty years till her death.

Since this study aims to grasp the approach used by her for *da'wah* and not just the approach itself, some effort needs to be spent to determine how she projected her life as a *dā'ī* (a person inviting people to Islam) and as a *mad'ū* (a person invited towards Islam) to others. Therefore, in what follows, a brief biography of her is presented in chronological order focusing on the context in which her conversion and migration took place. It will not only help the reader to understand her as a *mad'ū* but also shed light on the aspects that made her a *dā'ī*.

## FROM MARGRET MARCUS TO MARYAM JAMEELAH

Born in 1934 as Margret Marcus to a reform Jewish family, she was of German origin. Her father, Herbert Marcus was a businessman whereas her mother, Maira Marcus, was a social worker. Her parents were not much interested in Judaism and therefore, to better

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<sup>10</sup> The process of *da'wah* continued in the Indian Subcontinent even during the tumultuous era of British rule. Muslim scholars produced numerous works answering the Christian missionaries. See Rahmat Allāh Kairānawī, *Izhār al-Ḥaqq* (Beirut, Dār al-Jīl, n.d.).

<sup>11</sup> Works of Orientalists such as Ignác Goldziher (1850-1921) and Joseph Franz Schacht (1902-1969) are relevant examples in this case.

<sup>12</sup> For example, Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-1898), a famous Muslim reformer and educationist, penned down his *Al-Khutbāt al-Aḥmadiyyah fi'l Arab wa'l Sirat al-Muḥammadiyyah* answering *The Life of Muhammad and History of Islam to the Era of the Hegira*, a critique of the prophet Muhammad (PBUH), written by William Mure (1819-1905), a famous Scottish orientalist.

<sup>13</sup> In his famous work, *Islam and the West: A Historical Cultural Survey*, Philip Khuri Hitti (1886-1975), a famous orientalist, written an entire chapter entitled "Islam in Western Literature" which shows that for a long-time, westerner understood Islam by the self-created myths. See, Philip Khuri Hitti, *Islam and the West: A Historical Cultural Survey* (London: D. Van Nostrand Company, INC., 1962), 48-63.

integrate into American society, preferred to join the Unitarian Church following the footsteps of their elder daughter, Betty, and her husband, Walter.<sup>14</sup> However, Margret did not have any interest in embracing Christianity.<sup>15</sup> The study of the Ethical Cultural Society distanced her from religion.<sup>16</sup> She remained an atheist for some time, but the lecture of Abraham Isaac Katsh (1908-1998), a notable scholar of Hebrew and Arabic languages led her to gain back interest in religion.<sup>17</sup>

Because of her psychological problems she was unable to complete her formal education. Once when she was struck by a severe nervous breakdown, she thought to study the Holy Quran. Her mother brought her an English translation of it written by George Sale (1697-1736), a Christian thinker and clergyman. Her first interaction with the Quran was not much positive in the sense that she thought it was borrowed from the Old Testament.<sup>18</sup> However, she was cognizant that she was reading a translation written by a non-Muslim. Therefore, after her rehabilitation, she read *The Meanings of the Glorious Qur'an*, another English translation of the Quran by Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall (1875-1936), a Christian convert to Islam. The study of this new translation changed her entire perspective about the Quran, and she ended up saying: "I never knew that Guidance until I read in the opening of the second Surah."<sup>19</sup> Meanwhile, in a nearby library, she found *The Road to Mecca* of Muhammad Asad (1900-1992), a Jewish convert to Islam. This book not only enhanced her understanding of Islam but also allowed her to understand the cultural life of Arabs in depth. Before reading Asad's work she wanted to be a missionary to Arabs but now she started thinking to migrate to a Muslim land once and for all.<sup>20</sup>

After her second nervous breakdown, she spent almost two years in mental hospitals. Her partial recovery from mental illness brought her closer to Islam. However, before

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<sup>14</sup> Maryam Jameelah, *Memories of Childhood in America: The Story of One Western Convert's Quest for the Truth* (Lahore: Mohammad Yusuf Khan, 1989), 208.

<sup>15</sup> Maryam Jameelah, *Western Civilization Condemned by Itself: A Comprehensive Study of Moral Retrogression and Its Consequences* (Lahore: Mohammad Yusuf Khan, 1971), 1:xi.

<sup>16</sup> Maryam Jameelah, *Islam Versus the West* (Lahore: Mohammad Yusuf Khan, 1984), 2.

<sup>17</sup> Maryam Jameelah, *Islam and Modernism* (Lahore: Mohammad Yusuf Khan & Sons, 1988), xi.

<sup>18</sup> Jameelah, *Memories of Childhood in America*, 89.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>20</sup> Zohaib Ahmad, "Maryam Jamilah kā Dhhnī-o Fikrī Irṭiqā: Aik Tajziyātī Muṭāla'ah," *Fikr-o Nazār* 54, no. 3 (2017): 111.

taking any final decision, she wanted to meet Muslims of her locality. At that time, it was hard to find an Islamic mission in New York. Batoul Angell Morchid, a friend of her and a Christian convert to Islam, writes:

*Also, at that time the Muslim community in the West was small and most Muslims minded their own business making a way of living. Today, it is approximately 8 mill. Muslims in USA, and in Europe estimated up to 30 mill!! Islam has been well-known; Muslims are a big part of communities and can't be ignored, as along with it Muslims are more active in dawa in the West. No wonder a Righteous person in the 60ies would urge to find a Muslim community he or she would feel a belonging, and not be mocked at because of one's faith or jeopardize the Muslim identity. In fact; in that case a hijra would be compulsory.<sup>21</sup>*

The above quotation does not only provide information about the context in which her conversion and migration took place but also elucidates the difficulties new Muslims were experiencing at that time. Consequently, to know more about Islam, she started writing letters to the leading Muslim scholars of her era. Through these letters, she came into contact with Abū 'I-A'lā Maudūdī (1903-1979), the founder of *Jamā'at-i Islāmī*, a religious and political movement. She also met Daoud Ahmad Faisal (1891) who was serving as the head of Brooklyn Mosque at that time. It was him who convinced her to embrace Islam<sup>22</sup> and she became Maryam Jameelah from Margret Marcus. After two years of her formal conversion to Islam, in 1962, she migrated to Pakistan at the invitation of Maudūdī. She spent almost fifty years in Pakistan and never returned to America. She produced eleven books and several book reviews. She died in 2012 leaving two girls and two boys behind.

A study of her autobiographies reveals that during her stay in America, hardly, she was invited towards Islam by a *dā'ī*. What is clear from her life story is that she mostly learned about Islam through her efforts. Therefore, it can be said that she did not become a *mad'ū* for most of her life. Although it made the process of her conversion to Islam lengthier and difficult, it allowed her to know the areas available for *da'wah* works.

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<sup>21</sup> Batoul Angell Morchid to Maryam Jameelah, Oslo, 24 August 2011 (unpublished manuscript, personal library of Maryam Jameelah, Lahore).

<sup>22</sup> Deborah Baker, *The Convert: A Tale of Exile and Extremism* (Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 2012), 86.

## EARLIER WRITINGS ON MARYAM JAMEELAH

Being a convert, her life story remained the topic of discussion among the conversion scholars. Many writings are available which study why she preferred Islam over other world religions.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, as she spent a big part of her life writing in defense of Islam and criticism of Western culture, civilization, and history, several writers also discussed her view of Islam and western civilization.<sup>24</sup> Most of them argue that she presents a conservative<sup>25</sup> or rather fundamentalist<sup>26</sup> view of Islam. However, it is often ignored that during her stay in America and Pakistan, she was also engaged in missionary activities. Focusing on the practical aspects of her works, the current study analyzes her contributions to this field.

## A NOTE ON SOURCES

This study is using both her published and unpublished writings. Maryam Khanam, the daughter of Jameelah who is also taking care of her mother's library in Lahore, a city of Pakistan, permitted the researcher to use this material for educational purposes.<sup>27</sup> The unpublished material can be categorized into the following types:

1. Letters written to her by her family, Islamic missions, converts, publishers, and scholars.
2. Manuscripts of her published and unpublished writings.
3. Personal material such as photographers and greeting cards.

She did not preserve copies of the letters written by her. Therefore, what remains of this correspondence is only the replies of her correspondents. The researcher arranged

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<sup>23</sup> For example, see Marcia Hermansen, "Roads To Mecca: Conversion Narratives of European And Euro-American Muslims," *The Muslim World* 89, no. 1 (1999); Zohaib Ahmad, "A Voyage in Search of the "True Religion": A Study of Maryam Jameelah's Conversion to Islam and her Critique of Western Civilization" (International Islamic University, 2018).

<sup>24</sup> See, Najmus Sahar, "Maghrbī or Islāmī Tehzībōn mēṇ 'Orat kā Muqām: Maryam Jamīah kay Afkār kā Muṭāla'ah," *Tahqiqāt-i Islāmī* 34, no. 1 (2015); Saifudheen Kunju, "Maryam Jameela's Thoughts On Western Civilization," *The Companion* 07, no. 08 (2013).

<sup>25</sup> John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, *Makers of Contemporary Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 54.

<sup>26</sup> Hermansen, "Roads To Mecca," 79.

<sup>27</sup> The researcher is indebted to the family of Jameelah for permitting him to use the unpublished material.



the unpublished material in chronological order and compared it with her published writings to conclude.

## ENGAGEMENT IN DA‘WAH ACTIVITIES BEFORE ACCEPTING ISLAM

### A MISSIONARY TO ARABS

Since her childhood (even before her conversion to Islam) she was interested in becoming a missionary to Arabs. In a letter to her grandparents, she writes about her views regarding Arabs saying that she would like to become a missionary to Arabs to teach them that their mode of living was far more superior than the westerners. Therefore, they must keep themselves away from western civilization. To quote her:

*I want to go to the East and be a missionary to the Arabs to see as Muslims they keep on living their own kind of life. Jews like us have become just like the Christians and I don't want to see the Arabs be like that. I think their own kind of life is better...I can go to Egypt or Palestine and keep the Arabs like they are instead of copying us. I think I would like to live with the Arabs in Jerusalem.*<sup>28</sup>

It should be taken into account that since her childhood, she was not interested in the Western mode of life. Her mother noted that, unlike her other family members, she would complain about the absence of spirituality at her home.<sup>29</sup> John Esposito and John Vol also point out: "Margaret was psychologically and socially ill at ease and odds with many aspects of her culture."<sup>30</sup> She would fantasize about the simplicity of Arab culture and civilization, on the other hand. The above quotation indicates that initially, she was not interested in the religious aspect of Arabia, but it was the lifestyle of Arabs<sup>31</sup> which impressed her. However, later the study of Jewish history introduced her to the story of Abraham. She found out that he was the forefather of both Jews and Arabs.<sup>32</sup> Gradually

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<sup>28</sup> Jameelah, *Memories of Childhood in America*, 9.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>30</sup> Esposito and Voll, *Makers of Contemporary Islam*, 54.

<sup>31</sup> She would think about native Americans (Red Indians) in a similar fashion as well. See, Jameelah, *Memories of Childhood in America*, 50.

<sup>32</sup> Maryam Jameelah, *Islam in Theory and Practice* (Lahore: Mohammad Yusuf Khan, 1978), 6.



her awareness regarding Arabs increased and she not only started reading their culture and civilization but also their religion. To show her love for Arabs, she even started supporting them through the numerous pictures she would draw at her school and home.

### **A DĀ'Ī TO HER PARENTS**

When her interest in Islam developed, she started writing for the Islamic cause. She began with her parents telling them about Islam, but they were not ready to listen to her. They were not interested in religion as such and would see it as a cultural phenomenon. Nevertheless, till their death, she kept trying to convince them to accept Islam. During her stay in Pakistan, she even wrote open letters to her parents calling them towards Islam.<sup>33</sup> Later these letters were translated into Urdu and published in Pakistan as well.<sup>34</sup> Although it is not clear to what extent her parents took interest in Islam, they compromised with the conversion of their daughter. A chronological study of her family letters available in her library shows that around 1985, they also started writing her Muslim name "Maryam" in their letters which initially they rejected to use irrespective of the wishes of their daughter.<sup>35</sup>

### **A DETERMINED PREACHER OF ISLAM**

Her *Memories* contain several accounts of her interaction with non-Muslims which show how she tried to share her understanding of Islam with almost everyone she met including her friends, teachers, and doctors. Mostly she was discouraged and recommended to distance herself from Islam.<sup>36</sup> However, she kept trying steadfastly even with no chances of success. She would go to the mosque for Friday Prayer. She writes a story of her meeting with an elderly lady who shared her views about the Friday Prayer of Muslims. Not know about Islam, she was unable to understand the ritual as well as the recitation of the Quran. For her, it was a strange sight when standing in rows,

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<sup>33</sup> <http://www.iqra.net/articles/archives/openlttr.html>, accessed on 11-08-2019.

<sup>34</sup> Muḥammad Ḥasnain Qadrī, "Maryam Jamīlah kā Khulā khaṭ apnē Ghēr Muslim Wālidēn kē Nām," *Ta'mir-i Ḥayāt* January 10 1984, 12.

<sup>35</sup> Jameelah, *Memories of Childhood in America*, 181.

<sup>36</sup> Jameelah, *Memories of Childhood in America*, 99.

Muslims bow down and prostrate. She found it a "queer way to pray."<sup>37</sup> Jameelah tried to tell her about what all those acts for and how beautiful the message of the Quran was, but she did not change her perception. The way Jameelah penned down the story show that she was unable to convince the lady that the Muslim way of prayer is not strange at all and nothing is more moving than the recitation of the Quran. However, such incidents never stopped her from propagating her understanding of Islam.

### **A DEFENDER OF PALESTINIAN MUSLIMS**

Although she was a reform Jew, she never supported the Jewish takeover of Palestine. The massacre of innocent Muslims at Deir Yassin<sup>38</sup> left her in great shock. She tried to use almost every platform to support the case of Palestinian Muslims. For example, during the celebration of the anniversary of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights on Human Rights Day at her school when she listened to the speech of Eleanor Roosevelt (1884-1962), Commission of Human Rights and Chief Delegate of the United States to the United Nations, she tempted to ask about her views regarding the Massacre of the Palestinians. However, her mother did not allow her as she felt that Margret "would be lynched by the crowd if I (she) did!"<sup>39</sup> However, such incidents did not stop her from sharing her feelings about the issue. Her only novel, *Ahmad Khalil: The Story of Palestinian Refugee*, which she started writing at the age of twelve, is a pertinent example in this case.

### **WORK WITH ISLAMIC FOUNDATION OF NEW YORK**

Her *Memories* contains also an account of her discussion with a non-Muslim who was interested in embracing Islam and she convinced him providing various arguments from the Quran. As Maudūdi advised her either to openly engage herself in *da'wah* or migrate

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 158.

<sup>38</sup> See, Matthew Hogan, "The 1948 Massacre at Deir Yassin Revisited," *Historian* 63, no. 2 (2001): 1; Donald E. Wagner and Walter T. Davis, *Zionism and the Quest for Justice in the Holy Land* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2014), 206.

<sup>39</sup> Jameelah, *Memories of Childhood in America*, 54.

to any Muslim land,<sup>40</sup> she attached herself with different Islamic centers of America after her formal conversion to Islam. Once when she went to a mosque for prayer, she met with Nur-ud-Din Shoreibah, the Imam at the Islamic Foundation of New York. After the prayer, he introduced her to Samuel Kostelwitz, a Jew who was trying to learn about Islam. She asked him how he became interested in Islam. Kostelwitz shared his experience of visiting Israel with her. He told him that the brutal killing of innocent Arabs and Zionists' attitude made him leave his religion. Being a Chassidic Jew, he was unaware of Arabic. Therefore, it was hard for him to learn about Islam. All he could find was Muhammad Hamidullah's (1908-2002) *Introduction to Islam*. Kostelwitz's English was not good either. However, he was managing to read the book with the help of a dictionary somehow. Comparing both Biblical and Quranic versions of the classical stories of prophets such as Abraham, Isaac, Solomon, and David, she tried to convince him about the "truth" of Islam. She told him that Quranic treatment of these prophets was more reasonable than the Bible. Islam "raise Hagar to the status of a full-fledged wife equal in every respect to Sarah",<sup>41</sup> she added. Her arguments convinced Kostelwitz to embrace Islam. However, he said that he was fearing about the persecution he would possibly experience from his family. Jameelah advised him to pray to God for He would lead him towards the "right path."

After she accepted Islam, this was perhaps her first practical *da'wah* activity. This incident shows that it was not difficult for her to understand the problems of Kostelwitz as she went through similar experiences. Not to mention her conversion was also shaped by pondering over these stories as well.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, it can be argued that the comparison of these stories did not only help her to embrace Islam but also allowed her to convince others to tread her path. Moreover, the above-mentioned incident also shows that at that time, American Jewry was not supportive of the so-called state of Israel<sup>43</sup> as a whole but

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<sup>40</sup> Abu Ala to Margaret Marcus (Maryam Jameelah), Lahore, 25 February 1961, in *Correspondence between Maulana Maudoodi and Maryam Jameelah* (Lahore: Mohammad Yusuf Khan, 1969), 14.

<sup>41</sup> Jameelah, *Memories of Childhood in America*, 188.

<sup>42</sup> Ahmad, "A Voyage in Search of the "True Religion": A Study of Maryam Jameelah's Conversion to Islam and her Critique of Western Civilization," 57.

<sup>43</sup> It should also be considered that a great number of orthodox Jews also criticized Zionist takeover of Palestine as they thought that the state Israel must be achieved through divine intervention only. See, Dana Evan Kaplan, *American Reform Judaism: An Introduction* (London: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 16.

some were struck so deeply by the incident that they thought to distance themselves from their ancestral religion.

## CONVERSION OF MARLINA GARCIA

During her stay in Pakistan, Jameelah also continued her *da'wah* activities. She even played an important role in the conversion of Marlina Garcia, a Brazilian showgirl and film actress. Her sister, Blanche, accepted Islam and was living in Pakistan. After the death of her mother, Garcia was alone and depressed. She was sick of her profession and on the invitation of her sister, traveled to Pakistan thinking to embrace Islam. However, she thought that her sister betrayed her. The attitude of her nephews and brother-in-law was also rude to her. Heartbroken Garcia contacted Jameelah by letter. At that time Jameelah was living in Pattoki, a city located in Punjab, Pakistan. With her broken foot, Garcia traveled to Pattoki to meet her. During an emotional meeting, she told her that:

*I hate modern Western life and Western civilization just as much as you do, Maryam. The door to my former life is shut tight now; I cannot do otherwise than become a Muslim. Yes, I love Islam; every time I hear Adhan or call to prayer, the tears flow right down my cheeks. Yes, when I think back over my life, I know I have always been a Muslim at heart although I never knew it until now. Yes, I want to be Muslim even despite the terrible shock with my sister.*<sup>44</sup>

The above quotation indicates that Garcia was at the threshold of embracing Islam, however, she did not announce her *shahādah* at that time and went back to Australia. Perhaps the terrible incidents that happened to her in Pakistan made her revise her decision. In 1980, once again she came back to Pakistan. A long heart-to-heart talk with Jameelah convinced her to embrace Islam this time.<sup>45</sup> The details of these discussions are not available. However, after her meeting with Jameelah, Garcia was convinced to embrace Islam. She announced her *shahādah* at the hand of Mian Tufail Mohammad

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<sup>44</sup> Maryam Jameelah, *At Home in Pakistan (1962-1989): The Tale of an American Expatriate in Her Adopted Country* (Lahore: Adbiyat, 2012), 239.

<sup>45</sup> Maryam Jameelah, *At Home in Pakistan (1962-1989): The Tale of an American Expatriate in Her Adopted Country*, 365.

(1914-2009), a friend of Maudūdī who led the *Jamāt* after his death. Similar to Jameelah, she also adopted a Muslim name,<sup>46</sup> Ayesha/<sup>47</sup>Khadija.<sup>48</sup>

## DA‘WAH THROUGH CORRESPONDENCE

During her stay in America, Jameelah joined Mīrzā Aḥmad Sohrāb's (1890-1958) Bahai movement. Sohrāb was a Persian scholar and founder of The Caravan of East and West, a tax-exempt educational foundation for brotherhood. Through this movement, she developed the habit of correspondence<sup>49</sup> which became an integral part of her life even after her conversion to Islam and migration to Pakistan.<sup>50</sup> Due to her numerous writing on Islam and the West, she became a well-known personality both in the West and the East. According to Patrick D. Bowen, a notable American scholar, her migration and support of Maudūdī made her "the most famous living white American convert in the world."<sup>51</sup> Therefore, during her stay in Lahore, she continued her mission of *da‘wah* through correspondence.

A great number of letters written to her were by Euro-Americans who were either converted to Islam or had an interest in it. For example, Amina Lakhani, one of her pen friends, asked her advice about how she could rear her children in an Islamic way. Jameelah suggested some relevant books and advised her to join any Islamic mission.

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<sup>46</sup> It is also of importance that Jameelah was an ardent advocate of it. She thought that it would be best if a new Muslim changer her/his name. See, Jameelah, *Islam in Theory and Practice*, 68.

<sup>47</sup> According to the report of *Roznāmah Nawā-i Waqat*, a Pakistani newspaper, her new was Ayesha. See, "Brazil kī Khātūn Docter nē Islām Qabūl kar liyā," *Roznāmah Nawā-i Waqat*, August 5, 1980, 9.

<sup>48</sup> According to *Roznāmah Jang*, another important Pakistani newspaper, her adopted name was Khadija. See, *Roznāmah Jang* (Friday Edition), October 13, 1981, 5.

<sup>49</sup> Jameelah, *Memories of Childhood in America*, 85.

<sup>50</sup> Her daughter, Marya Khanum, told the researcher that her mother was so much fond of correspondence that everyday bulk of letters would arrive at their home. Marya Khanum, interview by Zohaib Ahmad, Personal Library of Maryam Jameelah, November 22, 2016.

<sup>51</sup> Patrick D. Bowen, *A History of Conversion to Islam in the United States, Volume 1: White American Muslims before 1975*, vol. 1 (Boston: Brill, 2015), 342.

Lakhani followed her advice informing her through another letter. This letter is still available in Jameelah's Library.<sup>52</sup>

The study of the letters available in her library indicates that she would also send her books to different Islamic missions solely for *da'wah* purposes. For example, A. J. Farid, another pen friend of her, writes: "I have sent your books 'Islam versus Ahlekitab' to Mr. Abdus-Samad Sharfudin, to whom you had kindly gifted the book as an aid in his Tablighi (missionary) work."<sup>53</sup> Similarly a letter written to her by Musaddique Thange, a member of Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA), tells that Jameelah permitted him to use her works for *da'wah* activities. Therefore, he was thankful for her and writes:

*Thank you very much for giving us permission to use material from your books and articles, for our Dawah activities. This means a lot to us. I cannot express in words, how much your letter has encouraged us. Jazakallah khairan! I am in the process of obtaining copies of your books and articles. Inshallah they will be most useful for our website as well as our quarterly publication called "Assalamu alaikum".*<sup>54</sup>

It should be taken into account that Muhammad Yusuf Khan, her husband, was a book publisher. Most of her books were published by Muhammad Yusuf Khan and Sons. She was supporting her family through her writings.<sup>55</sup> However, she still gave Thange permission to use her writings for *da'wah* activities both in hard and soft form.

## **ECONOMIC SUPPORT TO ISLAMIC ORGANIZATIONS**

She was also helped many religious movements economically. She was a frequent donor to *Jamā'at-i Islāmī* and other religious organizations in Pakistan. A receipt of her donation of PKR 500 to *Majlis Khidmat-i Islāmī, Lahore* can be seen in Figure 1.

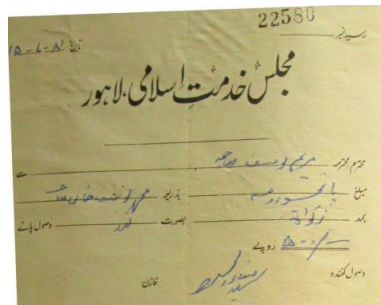
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<sup>52</sup> Amina Lakhani to Maryam Jameelah, Magnolia, 7 January 1979 (unpublished manuscript, personal library of Maryam Jameelah, Lahore).

<sup>53</sup> A. J. Farid to Maryam Jameelah, Karachi, 27 December 1978 (unpublished manuscript, personal library of Maryam Jameelah, Lahore).

<sup>54</sup> Musaddique Thange to Maryam Jameelah, New Jersey, 24 March 2001 (unpublished manuscript, personal library of Maryam Jameelah, Lahore).

<sup>55</sup> Maryam Jameelah, "My Life Story: An American Muslim Convert between Two Worlds 1934-1975" (unpublished manuscript, personal library of Maryam Jameelah, Lahore).



**Figure 1: Receipt of donation of Maryam Jameelah for *Majlis Khidmat-i Islami*, Lahore.**

## CONCLUSION

To understand Muslim women's contributions in the field of *da'wah* in the modern age, the current article studies the life and works of Maryam Jameelah. Leaving aside her academic contributions, this research focuses on the practical aspects of her work. It is argued that being a western convert to Islam, she was aware of the problems of non-Muslims who were interested in studying Islam. Thus, targeting English speaking audience, she wrote a bulk of literature to propagate her understanding of Islam in Euro-American communities.

Her *da'wah* activities can be divided into two types depending upon the life she spent in America and Pakistan. She had started defending Islam before her formal conversion to Islam. During that time, many new religious movements were emerging. Her thorough study of Islamic sources and scarcity of Islamic missions provided her a suitable environment for *da'wah*. She took full advantage and tried to share her understanding of Islam with almost everyone she met.

She can be seen as a determined and resolute preacher, a defender of Palestinian Muslims, and an active participant of *da'wah* activities during her stay in America. Although her works helped in the elimination of doubts about Islam, the available sources indicate that she was not able to convert anyone to Islam during that time.

During her stay in Pakistan, she did not join any religious or political organization, but she had been a frequent donor to the Islamic cause. Although she had an opportunity to use a well-prepared platform of *Jamā'at-i Islāmī*, she carried out her mission through her writings and correspondence. Thus, following the rules of Shariah, she continued her *da'wah* activities while staying at home. Being a person of two worlds, her life provides a model for Muslim women of both the West and the East to carry out the mission of *da'wah* in the modern world.



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